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PTQ4291

E45

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ACTION OCS-03

RELEASED IN FULL

INFO	LOG-00	MFS-01	MFA-00	NP-00	CA-01	CIAE-00	INL-00
	DODE-00	DOTE-00	WHA-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	UTED-00
	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	MFLO-03	AC-01
	NSAE-00	CAEX-01	PER-00	ACE-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	TEST-00	USIE-00	FMP-00	EPAE-00	IIP-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
	DRL-02	ALM-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/013W	

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O 191801Z DEC 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9220
INFO USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMCONSUL CURACAO
USINT HAVANA
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 004145

DEPT FOR CA/OCS/ACS/WHA FOR IAN S. GRAY, WHA/AND
DEPT ALSO FOR WHA/EX, S/ES-O, S/ES-O/DS, DS/IP/WHA
DEPT ALSO FOR S/DSS/ITA, DS/OP/WHA
TREASURY FOR OASIA/INL-AARON JONES

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: CASC, AMGT, APER, PGOV, PREL, ASEC, CMGT, KFLO, VE
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SUBJECT: CARACAS SITREP NO. 19; DECEMBER 19, 2002; 1100
HOURS

REF: CARACAS 004092

1. (SBU) OVERALL SITUATION:

YESTERDAY, THE SUPREME COURT FOUND THE MILITARY TAKEOVER
OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE BY THE NATIONAL GUARD
UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND RETURNED CONTROL OF THE POLICE FORCE
BACK TO CARACAS MAYOR, ALFREDO PENA. THE NATIONAL GUARD
HAS 15 DAYS TO LEAVE POLICE HEADQUARTERS, AND 5 DAYS TO
LEAVE THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER.

THERE ARE NO PLANNED MARCHES IN CARACAS TODAY. ANTI-

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GOVERNMENT LEADERS INSTEAD HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT TODAY IS A DAY TO "RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES," AND PREPARE FOR A "MEGAMARCH" ON DECEMBER 20 TO MIRAFLORES, THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE (THIS DESTINATION HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED BY ORGANIZERS). THEY ARE CALLING IT, "THE TAKING OF CARACAS," AND EXPECT MORE THAN TWO MILLION PARTICIPANTS. THE ROUTE HAS NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED YET. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SEVERAL DEMONSTRATIONS AND MARCHES PLANNED FOR INTERIOR CITIES TODAY.

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS REPORT THAT BETWEEN 60 AND 70 PERCENT OF GAS STATIONS IN CARACAS ARE OUT OF GASOLINE. THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE COUNTRY THE NUMBERS RUN FROM 50 PERCENT TO AS HIGH AS 90 PERCENT OF GAS STATIONS CLOSED. THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED REPORTS THAT THE DISTRIBUTORS FOR CARACAS ARE NO LONGER ABLE TO PROVIDE GASOLINE TO

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CARACAS. WE EXPECT CARACAS TO RUN OUT OF GASOLINE TODAY.

THE BUSINESS FEDERATION OF CENTRAL AMERICA, PANAMA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (FEDEPRICAP) EXPRESSED THEIR SUPPORT ON DECEMBER 18 FOR THE VENEZUELAN STRIKE.

2. (SBU) SECURITY SITUATION:

VIOLENCE IN CARACAS/REST OF VENEZUELA: AN ARMY SOLDIER WAS KILLED BY CRIMINALS YESTERDAY AT A GAS STATION IN A SOUTHWESTERN CARACAS SUBURB. THERE ARE RUMORS OF GASOLINE ROBBERY ON THE ROADS WHERE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN PULLED OVER AT GUNPOINT SO THAT THE THIEVES CAN SIPHON THE GASOLINE FOR THEIR OWN VEHICLES. ADDITIONALLY, TEXACO, NEAR THE EMBASSY, RECEIVED THREATS WHEN IT PROVIDED GAS TO A POLICE CAR THIS MORNING ALTHOUGH THE GAS STATION IS CLOSED. THUS, TEXACO IS NO LONGER WILLING TO FILL OUR OFFICIAL VEHICLES.

THERE WERE A FEW CLASHES BETWEEN PRO-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATORS AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATORS YESTERDAY AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE CITY. NO VICTIMS REPORTED.

YESTERDAY'S ROADBLOCKS WERE NOT ONLY IN CARACAS, BUT WERE ALSO IN MARACAIBO, WHERE FIVE MAIN AVENUES WERE BLOCKED. NO INCIDENTS WERE REPORTED.

SITUATION WITH USG EMPLOYEES: TWO EMPLOYEES WERE SCHEDULED TO DEPART THIS MORNING. WE HAVE CONFIRMATIONS THAT ONE ARRIVED SAFELY AND CHECKED IN.

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SITUATION WITH USCITS: NO INCIDENTS REPORTED.

(U) TRANSPORTATION SITUATION:

AIRPORTS/AVAILABILITY OF FLIGHTS:

MAIQUETIA AIRPORT (NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TERMINALS): WE HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS THAT SOME INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES ARE BRINGING IN LARGER PLANES IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS WANTING TO LEAVE VENEZUELA, AND SO THEY DO NOT NEED TO REFILL AT MAIQUETIA.

FUEL: AVIATION FUEL AT THE VALENCIA AIRPORT IS COMPLETELY DEPLETED. AVIATION FUEL AT MAIQUETIA IS VERY LOW. ALL THE GAS STATIONS NEAR THE AIRPORT ARE CLOSED.

AMERICAN AIRLINES: FIVE FLIGHTS A DAY TO MIAMI FROM CARACAS AND ONE FLIGHT A DAY FROM MARACAIBO TO DALLAS. ALL BUT THE 1500 HOURS FLIGHT (AIRBUS) FROM CARACAS ARE OVERBOOKED BY 15 PERCENT. THEY PLAN TO CONTINUE THIS SCHEDULE THROUGH THE REST OF THE YEAR. THEY ARE BRINGING THEIR AIRPLANES IN WITH ENOUGH FUEL TO RETURN TO THE

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U.S. AND HAVE CONTINGENCY PLANS TO REFUEL AT EITHER
ARUBA, CURACAO OR PUERTO RICO.

UNITED AIRLINES: FLYING AGAIN. ONE FLIGHT A DAY TO MIAMI
AT 1330. THEY HAVE TENTATIVE PLANS TO REMAIN ON THIS
SCHEDULE THROUGH JANUARY 6, 2003.

CONTINENTAL AIRLINES: ONE FLIGHT A DAY TO HOUSTON AND ONE
FLIGHT DAILY TO NEWARK. BOTH FLIGHTS ARE 88 PERCENT
FULL. THEY HAVE A CONTINGENCY PLAN TO REFUEL IN ARUBA
BEFORE ARRIVING IN VENEZUELA IF NECESSARY.

DELTA: ONE FLIGHT A DAY TO ATLANTA. OVERBOOKED BY 20
PERCENT.

AEROPOSTAL: TWO FLIGHTS A DAY TO MIAMI FROM CARACAS. ONE
FLIGHT A DAY FROM BOTH MARACAIBO AND VALENCIA. THE
VALENCIA FLIGHT IS STOPPING AT MAIQUETIA TO FUEL THE
PLANE. THEY ALSO REPORT AN INCREASE IN STOLEN/LOST
LUGGAGE. SOME AVAILABILITY.

ROADS: NO CHANGE.

3. (U) SUPPLIES AND SERVICES:

CURRENTLY WITHIN THE EMBASSY: THE LACK OF GASOLINE WILL
MEAN MANY FSNS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ARRIVE AT THE EMBASSY.
CONSULAR SERVICES WILL REMAIN OPEN BUT WE PLAN TO REQUEST

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THAT NON-IMMIGRANT VISA APPLICANTS WHO HAVE BEEN INFORMED
THAT THEY REQUIRE A PERSONAL INTERVIEW OR NEED FURTHER

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DOCUMENTATION SHOULD NOT APPEAR AT THE EMBASSY UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. FURTHER, WE WILL NOT PERFORM NOTARIAL SERVICES UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. A PRESS RELEASE WILL BE DRAFTED TODAY.

WITHIN THE CITY/COUNTRY: VENEZUELA IS ONLY PRODUCING BETWEEN 200,000 TO 250,000 BARRELS OF OIL PER DAY.

GASOLINE: WE HAVE RELIABLE REPORTS THAT CARACAS COULD RUN OUT OF GASOLINE AS SOON AS TODAY. THERE ARE VERY FEW GAS STATIONS OPEN IN THE CITY. SEVERAL CLOSED STATIONS HAVE LONG LINES IN FRONT OF THEM IN ANTICIPATION OF THEM OPENING.

POWER: TWO MAIN POWER FEEDERS FOR CARACAS DROPPED OUT THIS MORNING TEMPORARILY CAUSING POWER LOSS IN BUILDINGS NEAR THE EMBASSY. EMBASSY GENERATORS KICKED ON TO AVOID LOSS OF POWER IN THE CHANCERY.

WATER: NO CHANGE.

FOOD: GROCERY STORE SHELVES ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY DEPLETED. THREE STORES NEAR THE EMBASSY ARE OPENED TODAY FROM 900 TO 1200.

BANKS: NO CHANGE.

4. (U) EAC:

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LAST MEETING AT 1600 HOURS ON DECEMBER 12.

WARDEN MESSAGE: THE UPDATED TRAVEL WARNING OF DECEMBER 10 WAS SENT VIA E-MAIL TO ALL USCITS AROUND 1330 ON DECEMBER 11. THE DELAY WAS DUE TO SERVER PROBLEMS IN WASHINGTON.

5. (U) NEXT SITREP DUE: UNLESS CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT OTHERWISE, SITREPS WILL BE FORWARDED AT 1100 HOURS AND 1600 HOURS LOCAL TIME.

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